

Nadler Calls on Powell to Suspend Funding for UNRWA Until Terrorists are Removed from its Staff

Monday, 11 October 2004

Washington, DC -- In a letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell, Representative Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) stated that funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) should be suspended until members of terrorist organizations are removed from its staff. Nadler's request follows the recent revelation that members of the terrorist organization Hamas are employed by UNRWA. Nadler's letter to Powell, which was co-written by Representatives Eliot L. Engel (D-NY) and Jim Saxton (R-NJ), follows:

Dear Secretary Powell:

We write to express our shock upon learning that members of the terrorist organization Hamas are employed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). We urge you to suspend all funding for UNRWA until all members of terrorist organizations are removed from its staff. We further urge you to use the United States' leverage in the United Nations and UNRWA to ensure that its leader, Peter Hansen, is removed from office as soon as possible.

As you are likely aware, Peter Hansen, Commissioner General of UNRWA, has recently admitted, "I am sure that there are Hamas members on the UNRWA payroll and I don't see that as a crime." It is absolutely unforgivable for a United Nations organization to employ terrorists. Hamas is on the State Department's list of terrorist organizations and is committed to the destruction of the State of Israel. Even during the heyday of the Israeli - Palestinian peace process during the 1990s, Hamas carried out terrorist attacks on Israel, murdering scores of civilians, including several Americans. Even after the tragedy of September 11, 2001, Hamas continued to conduct and claim responsibility for numerous acts of terrorism, including the deadly May 27, 2002 Passover bombing at the Park Hotel in Netanya, the December 1, 2001 double suicide bombing on Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem, and fourteen murderous bus and bus stop bombings.

Under the leadership of Peter Hansen, UNRWA has long been accused of looking the other way or accepting no responsibility when charges arise that Palestinian terrorists operate in its refugee camps. Not only have many of the suicide bombers of Hamas and other Palestinian terror organizations come from UNRWA refugee camps, but students in UNRWA schools have received a steady diet of hatred and anti-Semitism in their textbooks. Furthermore, reports widely indicate that terrorists have taken advantage of the limited restrictions Israel places on humanitarian vehicles, including the use of ambulances and other U.N. vans for illicit purposes.

It is not permitted for the United States or any other member of the United Nations to fund such individuals. According to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373(1)(d):

"All states shall prohibit their nationals or any persons and entities within their territories from making any funds, financial assets or economic resources or financial or other related services available, directly or indirectly, for the benefit of persons who commit or attempt to commit or facilitate or participate in the commission of terrorist acts, of entities owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by such persons and of persons and entities acting on behalf of or at the direction of such persons."

Further, in Section 301 (c) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, the United States Congress demands that UNRWA "take all possible measures to assure that no part of the United States contribution shall be used to furnish assistance to any refugee who is receiving military training as a member of the so-called Palestine Liberation Army or any other guerilla type organization or who has engaged in any acts of terrorism." The intent is clear-the United States does not want money going to members of terrorist organizations under any circumstances.

In FY 2004, the United States provided \$127.4 million to UNRWA, and historically, the U.S. contribution has amounted to 22-25% of UNRWA's annual budget, the largest share of any donor nation. As members of Congress, we cannot stand idly by while United States funds are provided to members of Hamas.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency must carry out its humanitarian activities without the influence of terrorists who call for the murder of civilians. We must be certain that UNRWA directs 100% of its budget toward education, health and other humanitarian programs, not to the employment of Hamas members. At this time of intense terrorist activities worldwide, we simply cannot turn our heads in light of this disturbing information.

Therefore, we urge you to suspend immediately all U.S. assistance to UNRWA until you can confirm that the agency no longer employs members of Hamas or other terrorist organizations. Further, our UNRWA assistance program should also be conditioned upon the firing of Commissioner General Peter Hansen. His tolerance of Hamas members on the staff of UNRWA is simply unacceptable.

Sincerely,

Eliot L. Engel

Jim Saxton

Jerrold Nadler

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Member of Congress